

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 400

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Fred Dalton Thompson
of Lawrenceburg.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Fred Dalton Thompson; and

WHEREAS, a distinguished statesman, exceptional attorney, and accomplished actor, Fred Dalton Thompson rose from the bucolic fields of Lawrence County to achieve renown and acclaim in the courtrooms of Nashville, the Congressional committee rooms in Washington, D.C., and on the film sets of the American movie and television industry; and

WHEREAS, born on August 19, 1942, to Ruth Inez Bradley Thompson and Fletcher Session Thompson, in Sheffield, Alabama, Fred Dalton Thompson attended public schools in Lawrenceburg and graduated from Lawrence County High School; and

WHEREAS, after marrying Sarah Elizabeth Lindsay at the age of seventeen before he completed high school, Mr. Thompson worked two jobs to help support his family while he attended school, graduating from the University of Memphis in 1964 with degrees in philosophy and political science and obtaining his law degree from Vanderbilt University in 1967; and

WHEREAS, a self-described country lawyer at the beginning of his legal career, in 1969 he joined the United States Attorney's office in Nashville as an assistant attorney. In 1972, he gained his first taste of Tennessee politics while serving as the campaign manager for U.S. Senator Howard Baker's reelection campaign; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Thompson gained national prominence, when at thirty years of age, he was recruited by his mentor, Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr., and subsequently selected to serve as the Republican counsel on the Senate Watergate Committee during the investigation of the Watergate scandal; and

WHEREAS, his televised, intense cross-examination of former Nixon White House aide Alexander Butterfield made national headlines as it led to the revelation of the existence of listening devices installed in the Oval Office of President Nixon; and

WHEREAS, returning to Nashville after the committee investigation ended, Mr. Thompson entered private practice. In 1977, he reentered the headlines as the attorney for his client Marie Ragghianti, who filed a wrongful termination lawsuit after being fired from her job on the Tennessee Parole Board for refusing to parole prisoners who had paid bribes to the staff of Governor Ray Blanton; and

WHEREAS, the resulting public trial exposed the bribery scheme; Mr. Thompson's client won the case and was reinstated to her post. The case was soon documented in a best-selling book, and in 1985 a movie adaptation, *Marie*, was produced; and

WHEREAS, asked to play himself in the film, Fred Thompson launched his career as an actor with his portrayal of himself on the silver screen. Over the years, he appeared in dozens of films, often in roles that played to his physical stature, demeanor, and gravitas, including *No Way Out*, *Days of Thunder*, *Die Hard 2*, *The Hunt for Red October*, *In the Line of Fire*, *Cape Fear*, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, and *Secretariat*; and

WHEREAS, encouraged to enter the political realm, in 1994, Fred Thompson won election to the United States Senate to fill the unexpired term of Vice President Albert Gore, Jr.; the citizens of Tennessee reaffirmed their belief in Senator Thompson two years later by re-electing him to a full six-year term with the most votes any candidate for public office in Tennessee had ever received at that time; and

WHEREAS, Senator Thompson was a dynamic and well informed participant in the legislative process who always voted his conscience, and he earned the respect and admiration of his colleagues and constituents alike for his outstanding contributions as a member of the powerful Senate Committee on Finance, the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the Senate Committee on Intelligence; and

WHEREAS, a leader among leaders, he was selected in 1997 to serve as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, making him among the most junior senators in

history to chair a major Senate Committee; he served honorably in that position until June 2001; and

WHEREAS, during his Chairmanship, Senator Thompson's committee actively pursued an agenda aimed at the laudable goal of producing a smaller, more efficient, and more accountable federal government; and

WHEREAS, a tireless proponent of progress, he was a champion for his constituents' needs, and his actions precipitated remarkable benefits for the people of Tennessee, including his partnering with fellow Senator Bill Frist to secure funding for the largest Department of Energy research project to date: the Spallation Neutron Source (SNS) at Oak Ridge; and

WHEREAS, Senator Thompson's illustrious career in the United States Senate came to an end with the adjournment of the 107th U.S. Congress, as he decided not to seek reelection, and was succeeded in office by his good friend, Lamar Alexander; and

WHEREAS, remaining active in public policy, he served on the State Department's U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, as a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and as a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, in addition to helping guide the confirmation process of Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts; and

WHEREAS, returning to his acting career, Mr. Thompson won a legion of courtroom-drama fans for his longtime role as New York District Attorney Arthur Branch on the hit NBC television show *Law & Order* from 2002 until 2007; and

WHEREAS, also a regular contributor to the *Paul Harvey Radio Show*, the popular Fred Thompson attracted a grassroots draft effort in 2007 for him to run for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008; and

WHEREAS, in January 2008, Mr. Thompson threw his support behind his close friend Senator John McCain and provided the keynote nomination speech on Mr. McCain's behalf at the 2008 Republican National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, continuing his career in radio, he worked with his wife, Jeri Thompson, on his nationally syndicated *Fred Thompson Show* from 2009 until 2011, before moving on to additional work in television and feature films until the time of his death; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Thompson was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by his daughter, Elizabeth (Betsy) Thompson Panici, Fred Dalton Thompson is survived by his wife, Jeri Kehn Thompson, and their two children, Hayden and Samuel; his adult sons, Fred Dalton (Tony) Thompson, Jr., and Daniel Thompson; his five grandchildren, Dalton, Rachel, Lindsey, Adrian, and Antonio; and his brother, Ken Thompson; and

WHEREAS, Fred Thompson leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being, whose contributions to the government and citizens of Tennessee and this great nation stand as a monument to a job well done; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Fred Dalton Thompson, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Thompson.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.